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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 22 February 2017, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chair: Mr. Guterres ..... (Secretary-General of the United Nations)
Temporary Chair: Ms. Pollard ..... (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management)
Chair: Mr. Ramirez Carreño ..... (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Opening of the session by the Secretary-General

1. **The Temporary Chair** said that it was an honour to open the 2017 session of the Committee. Since it was his first time addressing that body, he wished to express his sincere commitment to the decolonization agenda, which was one of the defining mandates of the United Nations.

2. He had been born and had lived as a young man under the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal, which had oppressed not only his own country, but also several countries in Africa and Asia. The regime's completely absurd colonial policy, which Salazar had been determined to pursue in perpetuity, had inflicted a terrible, bloody war on the peoples of Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. That experience had created a strong bond between the members of the pro-democracy movement in Portugal, many of whom, including friends of his, had been arrested, tortured or forced into exile, and the liberation movements in Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. The Carnation Revolution, which had returned democracy to Portugal, had been made possible because the Portuguese army had grown tired of fighting a bloody war with no political solution and had decided it was time to end the dictatorship. The ensuing decolonization process had finally and belatedly brought freedom to the countries and peoples of Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe, and later to Timor-Leste, and to Macau, following the successful transition of its administration to China.

3. As a young man, he had followed the Committee's work with great hope, as had all Portuguese democrats and members of the liberation movements, and he had also witnessed the propaganda spread by the Salazar regime about the Committee in the Portuguese media. That was why he felt so honoured to be addressing the Committee as the Secretary-General of the United Nations and as the Committee's President pro tempore. The Committee's work was closely linked to the dreams and struggles of his youth, and to the fraternity linking his democratically-minded generation in Portugal to the liberation movements of countries that had made key contributions to the restoration of democracy in Portugal.

4. When the Committee had been established in 1961, the United Nations had had 104 Member States. That number had risen to 193, and most of the new States were former colonies. The Committee had played a vital role in the decolonization process, faithfully discharging its General Assembly mandate. Despite that significant progress, however, 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remained. The Committee was committed to assisting each Territory in finding an appropriate format and timing for the completion of its decolonization process, taking into account its particular circumstances. Achieving that goal would require proactive and sustained engagement from all parties: the administering Powers, the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the United Nations and other stakeholders.

5. Commending the work of the Committee, he said that he was encouraged by the resumption of informal consultations with the administering Powers and other stakeholders. He trusted that the Committee would continue to advance the United Nations decolonization mandate and assured it that the Secretariat would continue to support its work in the year ahead. He wished the Committee every success in the 2017 session as it strived to bring its important work to a conclusion.

6. *Ms. Pollard (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management) took the Chair.*

Election of the Chair

7. **The Temporary Chair** drew the Committee's attention to a note from the Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda and a note from the Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, both dated 14 October 2016, expressing their interest in chairing the Committee. She invited the Committee to elect its Chair by secret ballot.

8. *At the invitation of the Temporary Chair, Mr. Bai (Fiji) and Ms. Savitri (Indonesia) acted as tellers.*

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

Number of ballot papers:	29
Number of valid ballots:	29
Abstentions:	1
Number of members voting:	28
Required majority:	15
Number of votes obtained:	
Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela):	18
Mr. Webson (Antigua and Barbuda):	10

9. *Having obtained the required majority, Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) was elected Chair of the Committee.*

10. *Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) took the Chair.*

11. **The Chair** said that the delegations of Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Gabon, Germany, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and the African Union had indicated their wish to participate in the work of the Committee as observers.

12. In 2016, the Committee had fulfilled its commitment to the implementation of resolutions, established practices and legal aspects related to the Committee, thereby revitalizing its work and increasing the interest of Member States in its activities. Initiatives had included a revision of the omnibus resolution so that separate resolutions could be adopted for each Non-Self-Governing Territory, and the successful organization of a week of solidarity with the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories, including exhibitions and cultural activities. In addition, the Puerto Rican political activist Oscar López Rivera had been pardoned at the beginning of 2017. Efforts had been made to promote participation by petitioners from Non-Self-Governing Territories in line with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations; information on the Committee and decolonization issues had been disseminated through United Nations media; and a celebration of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had been held, alongside meetings with the General Assembly President.

13. The programme of work for 2016 had included frank discussions in formal meetings and in the regional seminar held in Managua, Nicaragua, on the colonial situation in the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, including disputes over sovereignty and the case of Puerto Rico. In the discussions on Western Sahara a firm line had been taken in defence of the implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

14. The Committee had carried out a series of activities to promote the cause of decolonization and increase its visibility as a United Nations body. It was committed to finding innovative solutions to implement the decolonization mandate on a case-by-case basis, in compliance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Every year, the General Assembly reiterated the need to eliminate colonialism. The effective implementation of the decolonization agenda required the collective participation of all affected parties.

15. Despite those efforts, the decolonization process was still incomplete. As the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism approached, greater efforts were needed to find means to ensure the immediate and full implementation of the Declaration through cooperation and frank dialogue between administering Powers, States involved in disputes over sovereignty, and the Territories in question, including at least one visiting mission in 2017.

16. The Committee could not remain neutral. The cause of self-determination was a principle of the United Nations and the Committee's position on decolonization had always been based on strict adherence to General Assembly resolutions and to the legal opinions of the Organization, within a framework of respect, tolerance and adherence to the practices and working methods of the Committee, including consensus on decision-making, unity and objectivity.

17. The Committee had a responsibility to the peoples of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories and Puerto Rico and needed to take concrete actions on the basis of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant resolutions, on a case-by-case basis, so that those peoples could exercise, where appropriate, their right to self-determination, including independence. All members of the Committee should work together, in the context of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, to put an end to the scourge of colonialism.

Adoption of the agenda

18. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of other officers of the Committee

19. *Ms. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba), Mr. Djani (Indonesia) and Mr. Suman (Sierra Leone) were elected Vice-Chairs, and Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected Rapporteur, by acclamation.*

Organization of work (A/AC.109/2017/L.1 and A/AC.109/2017/L.2)

20. **The Chair** drew attention to a note by the Secretary-General (A/AC.109/2017/L.1) indicating the resolutions and decisions relevant to the work of the Committee for the current year. The Committee also had before it a note by the Chair (A/AC.109/2017/L.2) containing suggestions concerning the Committee's organization of work, programme of work and timetable. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the tentative programme of work and timetable for 2017, with the understanding that they might be subsequently revised if required.

21. *It was so decided.*

22. **The Chair** suggested that, in accordance with the practice of the General Assembly, the Committee should agree to continue the practice whereby its meetings could be declared open without the presence of the quorum required under rule 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. That would enable the Committee to avoid late starts and proceed expeditiously with its work, thereby making optimal use of available resources. However, in accordance with rule 108, the presence of a majority of the members would be required for any decision to be taken.

23. *It was so decided.*

24. **The Chair** informed the Committee that two of its members had offered to host the regional seminar for the Caribbean in 2017. The Committee was scheduled to meet on 22 March 2017 to consider the planning and organization of the seminar. The meeting would be announced in the Journal. Furthermore, 14 Member States had expressed an interest in becoming full members of the Committee. In line with established practice, those expressions of interest had been published as official documents of the Committee and would be examined at a meeting to be announced in due course.

25. **Mr. Webson** (Antigua and Barbuda) said that his delegation remained fully committed to the decolonization process.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.